

From farm to table: local couple develops new app to deliver oysters directly to consumers

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Duxbury residents and oyster farmers Rob Knecht and Sims McCormick are releasing a smart phone app this week that lets customers select and order oysters for direct delivery. Photos courtesy Sims McCormick

Duxbury residents and oyster farmers Rob Knecht and Sims McCormick have developed a new smart phone app set to be released this week that connects consumers directly to oysters grown locally and around the country.

Called Real Oyster Cult, the app aims to create a farm-to-table connection by bringing a curated selection of fresh oysters to people who may not have easy access to the popular shellfish.

"Lots of people don't have direct access to fresh seafood like we do in New England," said Knecht. "We are lucky, but in many places in the country there is a big disconnect in the delivery and supply chain. We realized we could solve this with technology by providing this great service and culture to people all over."

The Real Oyster Cult app allows users to choose from a variety of oysters from the United States and Canada and order them for direct home delivery. There is a description of each kind of oyster including their taste, size, grow-out method and "the gritty details," which highlights salinity, tides and makeup of bottom of the ocean or bay where they grew. There is also merchandise like a shucking towel and knife with the Real Oyster Cult logo and general information about oysters: how to keep them to extend their shelf life – "they like a nice bed of ice but do not let them sit in water" – and a link to video showing how to shuck them.

Oysters have played a large role in the couple's lives for many years. Knecht and McCormick, who are married and have four children, have run an oyster farm since 2008, which is now a family affair. McCormick's brother, Will McCormick, owns an adjacent farm together they work side by side as Salt Meadow Farm. Also, the Knecht children pitch in during the summer and on weekends. Daughter Ella, 13, helped her dad manage the oyster seed this past summer and son Vaughan, 9, worked the tube sorter.

"Having friends out to our oyster float and enjoying oysters from the bay was the genesis of Real Oyster Cult," said McCormick. thought it would be amazing to try and capture that experience with technology, so we set out to create a design and user experience that would convey the beauty of the sea and also connect you intimately to oyster's origin and to the different regions and farmers."

Knecht said, "As oyster farmers, we love to take oysters to our friends houses and parties, even when we visit out of town. Real Oyster



and

fresh
"We

an

Sabina Knecht hangs out

with one of the homegrown
locals on the family's oyster
float in Duxbury Bay.

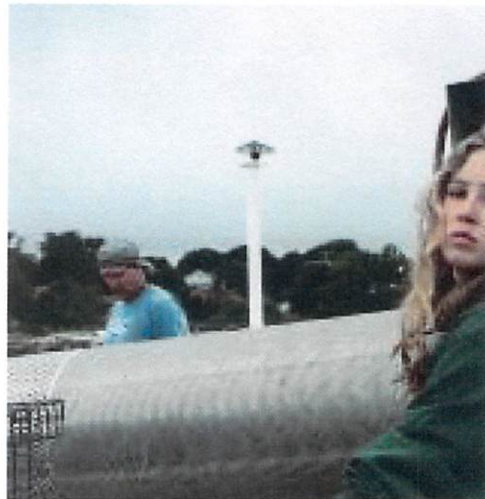
Cult is about creating those moments that are fun and visceral, when you are gathered around a kitchen table shucking and sharing with friends and family.”

McCormick agreed, saying: “Oysters bring people together. That’s what it’s all about – the culture and creating those moments with people you love.”

ROC seamlessly combines Knecht’s two passions: oysters and technology. Knecht and McCormick first got the idea for the app last year and have been developing the program ever since. Knecht had previously worked with the 360 degree immersive social media experience app Livestage. He convinced the same tech team, based in England, to engineer the software for Real Oyster Cult. While Knecht manages the technology team and business development, McCormick, who has an arts background, directs the creative team. From London to Minneapolis to Brooklyn to Duxbury, the whole team collaborates.



Vaughan Knecht, 9, sorted oysters out on the water.



Ella Knecht, 13, helped her dad manage the oyster seed this past summer.

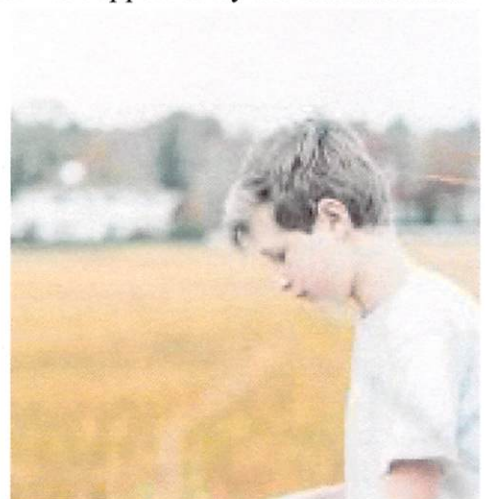
All in the family. The couple has four children; the older ones help their parents with different aspects of their oyster business.

Recently, Knecht and McCormick went out to California for a Citizen Science event. Citizen Science is an initiative that aims to inspire a love for STEM fields among students. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Citizen Science is supported by the Smithsonian and was founded by Jeff Martin, former head of music and entertainment for Apple and a member of ROC’s advisory board.

In California, Real Oyster Cult provided a raw bar for on the Citizen Science event. According to McCormick, ROC ties into the initiative because oysters are one of the most sustainable products around.

Most people who like oysters are really passionate about them, noted, McCormick. “They are packed with vitamins and minerals and are good for you and good for the environment,” she said. “They clean the oceans and combat climate change.”

The app is set for release in the Apple Store this week. Knecht and McCormick have reached this milestone after getting feedback on a beta version of the app from their



Preston Knecht, works on shucking oysters at a party held recently on the Knecht’s oyster float. Photos courtesy Sims McCormick

Founders' Club, family members, friends and industry experts.

"It all started on beautiful Duxbury Bay having our best friends and family come out to celebrate and enjoy the food, the environment, and the freshest oysters," McCormick said, "We're excited to share that experience with everyone via Real Oyster Cult."